

Message Text

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ACTION EA-14

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FM AMEMBASSY SAIGON

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 7142

C O N F I D E N T I A L SAIGON 16504

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINS, PINT, MILI, VS

SUBJECT: MINH BRINGS HIS SUBORDINATES DOWN-TO-EARTH

FOLLOWING SENT ACTION SAIGON INFO USDAO SAIGON USSAG NKP

THAI SEP 14 REPEATED TO YOU

QUOTE BIEN HOA 494

1. AT MEETING OF MR3 ARVN DIVISION COMMANDERS AND PROVINCE CHIEFS, SEPTEMBER 13, LTG NGUYEN VAN MINH GAVE REALISTIC, HARD-HITTING TALK COVERING POST CEASE-FIRE PHILOSOPHY OF GVN ON SEVERAL KEY ISSUES.

2. G-2 STARTED SESSION WITH ASSESSMENT OF COMMUNIST MILITARY INTENTIONS. HE STATED INFORMATION GLEANED FROM INTELLIGENCE, POWS, AND RALLIERS INDICATES COMMUNISTS WILL CONTINUE OPPOSING GENERAL ELECTIONS BECAUSE THEY KNOW SUCCESS NOT POSSIBLE THIS ROUTE. AS ENEMY BOUND EVENTUALLY TO ADMIT DEFEAT ON POLITICAL FRONT, THEY WILL NECESSARILY RESORT TO MILITARY SOLUTION, HAVING ADVANTAGE OF BUILD-UP OF SOLDIERS AND MATERIEL FROM NORTH WHICH NEITHER CEASE-FIRE NOR JUNE COMMUNIQUE HAS PREVENTED. BRIEFER CLAIMED FOUR-PHASE ENEMY CAMPAIGN UNDERWAY SINCE JUNE IN PREPARATION FOR A "WINTER-SPRING" OFFENSIVE, WHICH WILL CULMINATE IN COUNTRY-WIDE ATTACK MARCH/APRIL 1974 OF LESS INTENSITY THAN APRIL 1972 OFFENSIVE, BUT ABOUT EQUAL TO THAT OF TET 1968. G-2 SAID COMMUNISTS FEAR MOBILIZATION WORLD OPINION AGAINST THEM FOR BLATANTLY VIOLATING AGREEMENT, THEREFORE WILL TRY PROVOKE ARVN INTO MILITARY REACTIONS

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SO THAT BLAME WILL POINT TO GVN.

3. COS OF ARVN 5TH, 18TH, AND 25TH DIVISIONS, PLUS SOME PROVINCE CHIEFS, DESCRIBED ENEMY SITUATIONS THEIR AOS, STATING THEY AGREED WITH G-2,S ASSESSMENT AND SOLICITED LTG MINH'S SUPPORT FOR AIR STRIKES, INCREASED AMMO, ADDITIONAL ARTY, ETC.

4. LTG MINH THEN TOOK FLOOR TO LECTURE HIS SENIOR OFFICERS ON PRESENT DAY "REALITIES", STATING COMMUNISTS DOUBTLESS HAVE READIED ANOTHER OFFENSIVE BUT DECISION TO EXECUTE NECESSARILY DEPENDENT UPON CONCURRENCE AND ACTIVE SUPPORT OF USSR AND CHINA. HE REPEATEDLY EMPHASIZED INTERNATIONAL ASPECT OF SITUATION. MINH SAID "REAL WAR" TODAY IS ECONOMIC AND POLITICAL, NOT MILITARY. "WE MUST STAND ON OUR OWN FEET, FINDING A VIETNAMESE SOLUTION AS UNITED STATES PUBLIC OPINION WILL NOT SUPPORT CONTINUING HIGH LEVEL OF ASSISTANCE TO VIETNAM." MINH SAID RVN NOW IN ERA OF PEACE, NOT WAR, THAT URGENT PRIORITY IS TO WIN CONFIDENCE AND LOYALTY OF PEOPLE WHICH IS BASIC TO SOLUTION ALL PROBLEMS.

5. ANSWERING DIVISION COMMANDERS' PLEAS FOR MORE LOGISTICS, MINH STRESSED NEED TO ACCEPT FACT WAR MATERIEL NOT AVAILABLE ON SAME SCALE AS BEFORE, THUS COMMANDERS MUST LIMIT SCOPE OF OPERATIONS. HE ALSO CAME DOWN HARD ON "SHADOW SUPPLY" STATING THAT CONTRABAND SALE OF RICE AND OTHER NECESSITIES TO COMMUNISTS IS CRIMINAL OFFENSE WHICH MUST BE STOPPED. SUBJECT OF ECONOMIC BLOCKADE WAS DISCUSSED AT LENGTH AND WILL BE SUBJECT SEPARATE REPORT.

COMMENT:

GENERAL MINH'S PERFORMANCE WAS OUTSTANDING EXAMPLE OF TYPE OF LEADERSHIP NEEDED IN VIET-NAM IN CURRENT PHASE OF ITS TRAGIC HISTORY. HIS REALISTIC ANALYSIS OF SITUATION WITH CONCENTRATION ON PRACTICAL, OBJECTIVE APPROACHES, PLUS GUARDEDLY OPTIMISTIC OUTLOOK, OBVIOUSLY MADE DEEP IMPACT. END COMMENT. SIGNED WALKINSHAW
UNQUOTE
APPLING

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